



British Columbia Community Forestry Association Highlights from annual conference

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“Diversifying Opportunities for Community Forests,” was the title of the British Columbia Community Forestry Association’s (BCCFA) 2007 Conference and Annual General Meeting held in McBride, British Columbia on June 1–3, 2007. About 75 participants representing community forests, local and provincial governments, First Nations, universities, and non-profit organizations attended.



Ajit Krishnaswamy photo

Planters milled from cedar stumps at Cedar Three Products, a small specialty manufacturer.

The conference kicked off with a day-long tour of the McBride Community Forest led by **Marc von der Gonna**, General Manager of the McBride Community Forest Corporation. The Corporation, fully owned by the village of McBride, has a Community Forest Agreement (CFA) area-based tenure of 60,000 ha, with an annual allowable

cut of 50,000 m³. Participants were shown several timber harvesting operations located adjacent to private land that are highly visible from town. Innovations abound in this Community Forest, particularly with the use of partial, small-scale, and single-tree harvest employing multiple entries to manage for visual, recreational, and tourism values.

Participants were also taken to several forest-based, value-added manufacturing operations in McBride, which contribute substantially to the local economy and generate significant local employment. Cedar Three Products offered a sense of just how innovative local manufacturers are getting at utilizing low-quality (grade 4 and shell) cedar. The primary product from this mill is split cedar post and rail for export to the United States market. The mill also produces cedar shake and shingle blocks, and is making planters from the shell of the cedar stumps. Complete utilization is the rule; even waste is turned into a mulch product! Participants were able to see another mill in action, TRC Cedar, a larger operation which also uses cedar wood from the community. At this mill, 40 direct jobs are created by utilizing two truckloads of low-quality, rotten, and pulp cedar every day.

One example of local community benefits that are derived from Community Forests came with a visit to the site of the new McBride Community Hall, which is being constructed with help from a portion of the McBride Community Forest’s profits of \$1.4 million.

During the second day’s keynote addresses, **Shirley Bond**, Minister of Education and Deputy Premier, and **Pat Bell**, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, emphasized cabinet support for community forests. Bond recognized that rural communities need infrastructure for long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency. In his address, Bell asserted that Community Forests can operate on the principle of “social licence,” which gives them the flexibility to experiment, innovate, and pilot ideas like no other tenure British Columbia has had in the past. He also promoted working with Community Forests to create a tenure mechanism for managing non-timber forest products.

Robin Hood and **Jennifer Gunter** from the BCCFA, and **Jim Langridge** and **Ron Greschner** from the BC Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR), presented on community forest activities and progress over the past year. The number of communities awarded or invited to apply for CFAs is growing. Five long-term and 13 probationary CFAs have been awarded. Communities have submitted 11 new proposals, and the MOFR has invited 17 more communities to apply for CFAs.

The rest of the day included presentations, panels, and workshops that addressed opportunities for economic diversification in community forests, including possibilities for innovation in value-added wood products, non-timber forest products, alternative energy, and bio-fuels. A session on forest worker safety led by **Tanner Elton**, Chief Executive Officer of the Forest Safety Council, included issues raised in a draft paper on worker safety in community forests that was written by BCCFA’s **Susan Mulkey**, with FORREX support. This draft will become a chapter in the Community Forestry Guidebook, a BCCFA–FORREX collaboration. The day ended with a celebratory banquet, which saw **Ajit Krishnaswamy** of FORREX compare community forestry in India, the United States, and Canada. The evening concluded with community representatives showcasing Sechelt and Port Alberni as potential hosts of the 2008 BCCFA Annual Conference. The BCCFA held its Annual General Meeting the next day on June 3. 